

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
September 24, 2003, 4:30 p.m. Council Chambers

PRESENT

Joan Chelton
Cindy Felsten
Jay Myers
Gil Palmer
Chrystal Pushor
Barbara Stevens
Dick Underdahl-Peirce
Madhu Vedak

ABSENT

Pat Bryant
Dave Clingan

STAFF PRESENT: Director Arlette Tinsley, Deputy Director Lorraine Smith.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Commissioner Underdahl-Pierce moved to accept the minutes of the regular full commission meeting of August. Commissioner Chelton seconded. Motion passed.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Deputy Director Smith reported a balance of \$5,036.32 in the Commission's donations account reflecting the \$20 from videotape sale.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT:

Commissioner Palmer discussed an incident that occurred at North High School. The incident was a fight over a boy between two girls, one black and one white, in which racial slurs were hurled back and forth. The fight escalated, several other students became involved and the police were called resulting in an arrest. As representatives of the Human Rights Commission, Chairperson Palmer and Deputy Director Smith were contacted for an emergency meeting by Superintendent Quick to address potential repercussions and discuss ways to be proactive in addressing the subject of diversity. In addition to Chairperson Palmer and Deputy Director Smith, community members Gwen Wiggins, Mindy Lewis, Cindy Frye, Rosemary Rehak and Principal Rogers also attended at Dr. Quick's request.

There were some good ideas relayed during the meeting. Discussion included how the school needed to be proactive in making sure that African-American students aren't singled out in their effort to insure that other fight incidents don't occur.

Director Tinsley stated the Mayor asked to be briefed on the situation and asked what assistance was needed from him to assist the Human Rights Commission and/or the schools with this situation. Deputy Director Smith did this. Recommendations for the up-coming Martinsville football game at North High School were made. Meeting participants suggested that staff and a diverse police presence be increased. The Mayor

spoke with the Police Chief insuring that an African-American and female police presence was in attendance.

Deputy Director Smith stated that after the meeting, she still felt that there needed to be some continued discussion within North High School; that they still needed to work on taking some steps toward more inclusiveness. Additional topics of concern include teacher and administrator education being needed in order to effect change in the school. An over-all package of mandatory diversity training could include such options as hosting the Martin Luther King celebration.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Director Tinsley reported that a new secretary had been hired as advised in her previous e-mail. A brief overview of the process used: The personnel office advised that over 260 applications were received. All applications were read and reviewed then separated into four categories; minimally qualified, not qualified, well qualified and over-qualified. Along with Deputy Director Smith, Director Tinsley narrowed down the applicants to twenty-two (22). The goal was to hire a well-qualified candidate with proficiency in the software applications utilized in our office as well as telephone-intake skills. If the secretary can conduct the screening and the intake then staff can stay focused on their work. Staff looked for a combination of secretarial along with case-processing and intake skills. Director Tinsley stated that staff affirmatively interviewed, by looking at minimally qualified, diverse candidates and at least offering them an interview if possible. Spanish was a plus but not a requirement. The one Latino applicant was a no-show for the interview. The candidate selection was narrowed to fifteen for interviews and five candidates were brought back for a skills test. Lula Young is the candidate chosen for the secretarial position.

Director Tinsley acknowledged the hard work Deputy-Director Smith had invested in the hiring process, school complaint issue and the KidsCommons project. She advised that KidsCommons had requested our organization along with the NAACP, Su Casa and others, to be non-financial sponsors of an exhibit on loan to Columbus from The Chicago Children's Museum. The Face-to-Face exhibit opens Ethnic Expo weekend. Director Tinsley stated that she and Deputy Director Smith were concerned after receiving the initial e-mail about the exhibit, which is about race, diversity and stereotyping, but also included a warning label. Director Tinsley was concerned because what can work in Chicago, which has a very diverse mix of students in their urban schools, may not work in a community with a predominantly caucasian student body.

Deputy Director Smith continued stating that upon further review of the materials, she believes this will be one of the more excellent educational projects that Columbus has ever seen. The Chicago Museum recommends ages 5 –12. It is an exhibit to teach children how to recognize prejudice and discrimination. There are various stations that will be set up in the exhibit such as 'The Bridge, The School Bus and a third called The Stereotype Diner'. It draws the children in visually. More importantly they have caregiver labels to provide the adult attending with the child, more information about

stereotypes and prejudice. At the end they will be able to empower themselves with tools on how to recognize and deal with negative incidents they may witness or become a victim of. They will also have resources available on stereotypes and prejudice and discrimination. Participants will not walk away empty-handed. After Ethnic Expo weekend, there will be a nominal charge of \$2.00 to view the exhibit. School-sponsored classroom trips will be admitted free of charge.

Staff and Commissioners voiced concerns regarding all citizens, regardless of economic status, being able to visit this exhibit. Commissioner Myers suggested that the Human Rights Commission sponsor a free day, or night, to provide an additional opportunity for citizen's to visit the exhibit. Director Tinsley advised that HUD money is available to use for racial discrimination education. Further research will be done to determine the cost of sponsoring a free day. **After discussion, Commissioner Myers moved that Chairperson Palmer be authorized to decide exactly what financial contribution to make after obtaining information from KidsCommons. Commissioner Stevens seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

FOR DISCUSSION/ACTION

Regarding the Laws criteria, Director Tinsley explained that she attended a week long mediation training, conducted by an adjunct professor who teaches law and public policy at SPEA and IU School of Law, Indianapolis. Professor John Crouse uses a modified form of the national issues forum to discuss policy issues. It has been used in the state of Indiana for gambling, property tax and various other difficult issues. The Director explained that she structured the next agenda item, the Laws criteria, in the same way. The process involves options one, two and three. It is structured in such a way to encourage everyone to participate. The discussion would be better in an informal setting. Director Tinsley described the commission process: Commissioner Palmer will entertain a motion to adjourn. The meeting will then be conducted as a facilitated meeting rather than a formal meeting run by Robert's Rules of Order. The Director and Deputy Director will not express any opinion. The Staff will ensure that everyone talks about options one, two and three and then creatively looks at a possible option four. Everyone will think of at least one good thing (one 'pro') about each option. After discussing the pros of option one, the cons will be discussed. Then discussion will move on to options two and three. The goal is that through that deliberation process Commissioners will begin to see the areas of conflict, what areas everyone agrees on and what might be a creative solution, even if that means keeping exactly what the commission has now. Director Tinsley opened the floor for questions. She had previously verified with John Baughn, Clerk-Treasurer, to make sure the meeting could be adjourned and be reconvened during the same period. He advised that it is acceptable through a motion.

ADJOURN:

Commissioner Palmer moved that the meeting be adjourned. Commissioner Myers seconded. The motion passed unanimously.